

LIFE AND WELLBEING EDUCATION

A synergy to promote digitalisation

Malta Communications Authority CEO **JESMOND BUGEJA** and eSkills Malta Foundation chief administrator **CARM CACHIA** speak about their recently-formalised partnership.



Parliamentary secretary Clayton Bartolo (centre) flanked by eSkills Malta Foundation chief administrator Carm Cachia (left) and MCA CEO Jesmond Bugeja at the launch of the first intake of the eBiznify programme under the new MCA and eSkills Foundation collaboration. PHOTO: PIERRE SAMMUT/DOI

The MCA and eSkills Malta Foundation recently signed a memorandum of understanding. What is it all about?

The MCA has long been involved in helping the public to explore opportunities that come with living in a digital society. As part of its regulatory remit, the MCA is bound to ensure the public is made aware of several areas that we regulate, including eCommerce. The eCommerce Directive is, in fact, heavily focused on ensuring that consumers are aware of their rights online, as well as growing awareness of the opportunities eCommerce can bring to businesses selling online.

The eSkills Malta Foundation's core mission, on the other hand, is to foster and increase the level of digital skills among the local population with a focus on the education, SME training and the IT profession.

We thus see a synergy between the two entities and this MoU allows us to work together and to offer the eBiznify eCommerce training programme in a

concerted effort for the benefit of society.

Is the MoU limited to eBiznify or does it go beyond the eCommerce programme?

The eSkills Malta Foundation is a national coalition with founding members coming from education, industry and government. The MCA is one of the founding members and we have already collaborated on other initiatives. The MOU is specific mostly to eBiznify as we believe that at present it is a deliverable that can be of great support to local sellers as they adjust to the new realities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The need to go online and provide e-commerce services is not new. However, the pandemic has put further pressure on sellers to offer their services and wares online as today's buyers expect to engage with retailers through multiple channels, especially the internet.

Going forward, we aim to keep our partnership active by joining

forces on other fronts that we believe share a common final objective. Both organisations are heavily involved in the digital sector, and thus we envisage other projects will be delivered in unison in future.

What is the eBiznify programme and what does it cover?

The eBiznify programme has been a major deliverable of the National eCommerce Strategy, which the MCA published in 2014 and spans till the end of this year. At the time, the MCA had found a significant knowledge gap among local businesses in relation to digital technology and an appetite for offering their products and services via an e-commerce channel.

eBiznify aims to address this gap in a direct manner. It offers attendees an accredited training programme that is offered online, at zero cost for the attendee. This format is ideal for people who do not have the time to attend classroom sessions as they can access all the content virtually through any internet-connected device.

The programme covers various major areas in relation to e-commerce, including website design, shipping and logistics, data analytics, payment management and online marketing, to name but a few. It is also accredited to MQF Level 4, thus providing attendees with a certificate of merit on successful completion.

The synergy created by this partnership will help both entities reach a wider segment of the population and hence generate greater interest and involvement in the initiatives being rolled out.

The first intake of eBiznify under this MCA and eSkills Foundation collaboration was launched last month by Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services and Digital Economy Clayton Bartolo at a virtual press conference. At the launch he said: "Notwithstanding the negatives that the pandemic brought to our way of life, there is no better time to ensure that we increase the upskilling of our local workforce in the digital economic sector."

"Through this programme, the government will highlight to our local entrepreneurs the significance of adopting an online business model, especially now that buying from the internet is expected to soar when compared to previous months.

"Two years down the line from the launch of the eBiznify programme, I am optimistic that the sterling work being done by the MCA and the eSkills Malta Foundation on this training programme will bring us much more closer to our vision: creating a future-proof platform for SMEs, where online commerce becomes an integral part in the way business is conducted in our country."

eBiznify is part-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund – European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020. For more information on the MCA and eSkills Malta Foundation, visit the websites below.

WWW.MCA.ORG.MT
HTTPS://ESKILLS.ORG.MT

MCAST in European water-related VET project

Last month, representatives from the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and four other European countries discussed the future of skilled vocational practitioners in the field of water technology during an online webinar of the Platform of Vocational Education (PoVE) Water project. This European project draws on existing and emerging vocational competences and skills needs in the water sector with the aim of translating them into a vocational excellence approach.

The project, which kicked off last January in Brussels, brings together vocational training and education (VET) and higher education institutions, stakeholders in the water industry, research centres, governmental institutions and water sector representatives from Malta, the Netherlands, Scotland, Latvia and the Czech Republic. These partners share a common interest

in developing the full potential of VET institutions to play a proactive role in support of growth, competitiveness and innovation of the water sector.

During the first part of the webinar, four Dutch partners – Learning Hub Friesland, Vitens, Katapult and CIV Water – shared their knowledge and experience on how to achieve good cooperation between VET and the water industry. The participants subsequently discussed their ideas and insights about how to stimulate collaboration and strengthen regional networks.

Many countries, especially in Europe, take their clean drinking water supply for granted. But the process of water production is a complex one that requires a skilled workforce to operate. Several European countries are struggling with a shortage of young people interested in water-related education. This is the main reason why European

colleges and professionals from the water industry have joined forces to train water professionals at VET level.

The webinar revealed that there are still significant differences between the various European regions in this regard. All project partners operate within contrasting contexts with different challenges and opportunities. Nicola Murray from Glasgow College, Scotland, remarked: "It was surprising to see that we all have a different starting point."

Speaking about the Maltese context, MCAST deputy director for innovation Edwin Zammit said: "One of our biggest challenges and a common factor that unites us in Malta is the high freshwater scarcity on the island. It is vital to invest in the right talent and education to provide clean and safe water for all."

Malta has the lowest water resources index and highest water competition

index in the whole of the Mediterranean basin. The country faces challenges for it to be at the forefront of both water technology and in the skilling of water operations and management to cater for its socioeconomic conditions.

It is within this setting that the MCAST Water Research and Training Centre holds strong potential. The centre focuses on water enterprise and aims to apply creative ideas and innovations to offer practical situations in the water sector, as well as solving other challenges encountered locally. The centre is characterised by three main themes – water quality, water systems control and water efficiency and innovation.

For more information about the PoVE Water project, visit the website below or e-mail research.innovation@mcast.edu.mt.

WWW.POVEWATER.EU